

AN OPEN LETTER

TO

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL BEGIN

AND

SIR LOMER GOUIN

PREMIER OF QUEBEC

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"The English-speaking Catholics
of Ottawa, struggling to save their schools
from ruin, respectfully ask, What would you
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Your Eminence, in a public letter to Archbishop Bruchesi, and you, Sir Lomer Gouin, during a recent debate in the Quebec Legislature; you have taken sides with your compatriots in the unhappy strife now raging throughout Ontario over their persistent efforts to enlarge the scope of the French language in the primary schools of this province.

Your Eminence claims to speak with understanding of "the surge of indignation which unjust and vexatious measures have caused to rise in the midst of the minority of Ontario. These vexatious measures are levelled at the very fountain head of the intellectual and religious life of our brothers and co-religionists, and would stifle on the lips of a class of honest and loyal citizens the language spoken by themselves and their children—a language which is the guard of our faith and the instrument of our national culture." And you rightly say, "I do not admit, and no one of common sense can admit, that in a civilized country like ours, brutal force and strength of numbers are to be considered as the ultimate deciding criterions."

You, Sir Lomer Gouin, vividly picture the French and English armies vying with each other in fighting for the triumph of justice on the bloody fields of Belgium and France, and you ask: "Why is it that their brothers in Ontario are divided as to the advisability of teaching the language of the discoverers of the country to the children of a minority—a language which is also that of a people for whom the Empire is at this very moment risking the fate of its fleets, its armies, its colonies, and of its national life?"

Incited by such powerful pleas for justice to "an oppressed minority," the Montreal Star in its leader of January 13, says: "We have frequently in these columns pressed upon the people of Ontario the high patriotic wisdom—to say nothing of the historic British policy of conciliation and tolerance—of dealing in a spirit of generosity and good will with the French-Canadians who have paid them the compliment of going to dwell in their section of the Dominion."

These be fine words and lofty sentiments, but what are the facts of the case?

If there is a racial war in Ontario to-day, who or what has brought it about? If intolerance prevails, when and how was it introduced? If public feeling is inflamed, to what malevolent agency is it due?

Your Eminence is well aware that an Ottawa journal, *Le Droit*, is the official organ of "The French-Canadian Educational Association of Ontario"—"L'Association Canadienne-Francaise d'Education d'Ontario." In its issue of December 6, 1914, appears an historic sketch—"Resume historique"—by a staff writer, dealing with the French schools in Ontario, in the course of which it is related that "in 1760 England sent her loyalists into Upper Canada to pull down the Cross of Christ, and mow down the lilies of France."

"En 1760 l'Angleterre envoya dans la Haut Canada ses loyalistes pour y abatre la croix du Christ et y faucher les lys de France."

What has your Eminence to say of that narration? And you, Sir Lomer Gouin? Is it true? Is it in any view defensible? Is it in any sense excusable? Is it calculated to promote peace and harmony between the French and the English people of this Province?

"French and Catholic Soil."

In the same historic sketch the writer tells how "French-Canadian families from the border counties of Quebec began the invasion of the Counties of Prescott, Russell and Glengarry, driving out before them the usurpers of that French and Catholic soil."

A peu près dans la même temps aussi les familles Canadiennes-Françaises des comtés limitrophes de la Province de Québec commençaient l'envahissement des comtés de Prescott, Russell et Glengarry, chassant devant eux les usurpateurs de ce sol Français et Catholique."

Here we have a brutally frank avowal of the aggressive spirit in which "a class of honest and loyal citizens" from the neighboring Province of Quebec paid the people of Ontario "the compliment of going to dwell in their section of the Dominion."

These belligerent invaders, as they advanced, seized the Primary schools and ruthlessly imposed on the children of all "usurpers" alike the language which, in your Eminence's esteem, is the guardian of your people's faith and the instrument of their culture.

It was about the year 1875 that this invasion of Eastern Ontario began. Bishop Duhamel, who had just completed his first year in the see at Ottawa, joined hand and heart with the invaders. Indeed, it was he who organized and directed their forces in prosecuting "the work of colonization," as it was then modestly called.

Not only the language of Quebec, but the discipline of ecclesiastical Quebec, its petty Gallican laws and imposts, its traditions and customs, its color, tone and habiliments, yea, its rancorous family quarrels, were introduced to differentiate in the public eye the diocese of Ottawa from all other dioceses in Ontario then forming the ecclesiastical Province of Toronto.

Under the new regime, truly apostolic in its origin, spirit and purpose, is it at all surprising that hordes of invaders from Quebec soon drove from the soil of Prescott and Russell, Scotch, Irish and English Catholics, who, from 1817 to 1875 had been shepherded by such "usurping" pastors as Patrick Sweeney, Alexander MacDonnell, James Moore, William Dolan, C. Cassidy, J. H. McDonagh, John MacDonald, John Francis Cannon, M. Monaghan, John Farrell, Jeremiah Ryan, John L. Leary, Joseph Antony O'Malley, Patrick McEvoy, Thomas O'Boyle, P. Killoran, John J. Collins, D. F. Foley and others of blessed memory?

The good bishop never relaxed in his propaganda for race and language supremacy, even going so far as to suppress the use of the English language in his official letters to the English-speaking clergy, although they with their people were and now are a more respectable minority within the diocese of Ottawa than the French-Canadians of Ontario are in proportion to the whole population.

So, your Eminence, we understand and can easily explain "the surge of indignation which unjust and vexatious measures have caused to rise in the midst of the minority" (of the diocese of Ottawa). And we know only too well how, and can easily explain why, continuous reckless raiding on the schools of the province to make them French was regarded by the Protestant majority, as a carefully planned campaign by the Quebec hierarchy to acquire on Ontario soil dominion in civil affairs. No wonder it was counteracted in 1884-86 by a widespread agitation menacing the very existence of Catholic Separate Schools, and the brunt of that attack had to be borne by the body of English-speaking Catholics already grievously wounded in the house of their friends.

A. Militant Prelate.

About this time Bishop Duhamel became Archbishop, and his new dignity seemed to require of him an even more pronounced hostility to the school laws of Ontario and the regulations of the Department of Education, which he had always regarded with disfavor from the viewpoint of a member of the Council of Public Instruction of the Province of Quebec. Thus, in 1895, when a special commission demanded by the French section of the Ottawa Separate School Board was appointed for a specific purpose, his intolerant attitude first brought

about the resignation of two Catholic commissioners and ultimately resulted in a general exodus of the Christian Brothers from the city schools, and from Renfrew, Kingston and Hamilton as well. Again, in 1904, his injudicious quarrel with a group of French lay teachers holding Ontario certificates culminated in the famous Gratton case which spread trouble and confusion all over the province and prejudiced the professional standing of all teaching Brothers and Sisters.

The final decision of the Privy Council in the Gratton case came as a rude shock to the militant prelate, and convinced him at last that it was neither wise nor safe to assume that Quebec could fix standards for Ontario schools.

Allusion has been made to the introduction from Quebec of numerous family quarrels, meaning the wretched and prolonged controversy regarding Laval University. Your Eminence knows where Monseigneur Duhamel stood all through that fight, supporting the Bishops of Montreal and Trois Rivières against your venerable predecessor and the governors and faculties of Laval. Perhaps it is not so well known that he sought to compel the enlistment of his clergy on the same side, pressing them to sign a memorial to the Holy See in which the most astounding charges were formulated against the University, and that the English-speaking priests unanimously refused to subscribe, for two good and sufficient reasons:

- (a) They could not affirm the charges to be true, and
- (b) The questions at issue did not concern the Catholics of Ontario. "Remember, the diocese of Ottawa belongs to the ecclesiastical Province of Quebec," was the angry retort.

The dissenters, however, remained firm, a chastened minority, indeed, but supremely content to escape the reproach which all trespassers invite. "Why do you fell my wood, and why cross my fountains?" In the fierce white light of subsequent Papal pronouncements, all but the blind could see that they had chosen the better part.

In a posthumous letter originally addressed to the Cardinal Prefect of the propaganda, April 20th, 1902, Archbishop Duhamel naively reported: "When I became Bishop of Ottawa I perceived that a certain spirit of nationality commenced to show itself." No such un-Catholic spirit had manifested itself up to that time. Why? Because the missionary work dearest to the heart of his predecessor, Bishop Guigues, and that always lay nearest his hand, was emphatically not the work of French-Canadian colonization and expansion, not the "invasion" of Ontario. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

In the same remarkable document the Archbishop assured the Cardinal that the territory within his jurisdiction "does not tend, far from it, to take on an English appearance. It tends, on the contrary, to take on more and more a French appearance." In support of this contention he referred to a recently published book on the Catholic population of English America, in which the author, a learned Frenchman, "speaks of the extraordinary increase of French-Canadians and the diminution of English Catholics, citing, for example, the Counties of Russell and Prescott, which form a large part of the diocese of Ottawa in Ontario."

The Big Stick of Race Supremacy.

Archbishop Duhamel passed away on June 5, 1909, sincerely mourned by all English-speaking Catholics for his many estimable private virtues, and by them freely forgiven the manifest wrongs endured under his administration - wrongs which they were disposed to forget, and would have forgotten ere this but for the arrogant pretensions, the insolent threats and the violent activities of the racial-mad party his dominant policies had evoked.

In the pulpit and in the press, on convention platform and from congress forum, the big stick of race supremacy was flourished in the face of the Church and State. Week after week, from Ottawa headquarters, frantic agitators issued manifestoes such as this:—"The faithful of the diocese of Ottawa are four-fifths French, and one may conceive with what disappointment and irritation people here would regard the nomination of an Irish Archbishop, for he could not accomplish what the Church and the faithful expect of him. The result would be disturbances and conflicts deplorable, which could only have disastrous consequences."

"From the point of view of French-Canadians in Ontario the nomination of Monseigneur Gauthier as Archbishop of Ottawa would be a calamity."

"French-Canadians have been laboring for long years to promote their expansion. The progress in this sense which our people have accomplished in fifty years would be reversed by the blow. It would annul the noble programme which the congress of French-Canadians drew up at the beginning of this year (1910). It would ensure the annihilation of our race in this province."

"We wish to protest against the choice of the Archbishop of Kingston as successor to the regretted Archbishop Duhamel. We wish our next Archbishop to be one of our own and that he may be able to encourage and help us to continue our work of national progress so well begun in this province of Ontario; and to accomplish the Providential Mission, which has been marked out for our race. May heaven grant that our protest may not be too late."—*Le Temps*.

Their pious prayer not having been registered in time, the much dreaded "calamity" came to pass, and what followed? The French-Canadian Educational Association immediately proceeded to dictate to the new Archbishop most offensive terms relative to his enthronization. Their contemptible blunderbuss failed somehow to intimidate him, and the amazed officers of the association retired to their tents, where they resolved, with profound regrets, to revoke a French address of welcome already prepared for presentation.

All things were now ripe for the fulfilment of their prophecies of "disturbances and conflicts deplorable which could only have disastrous consequences." What they said would happen, has happened. "Krieg ist Krieg." "Les Canadiens Français ont acquis des droits et ils vont lutter pour les exercer; ils sont maîtres des écoles séparées et ils vont les conserver, s'il y en a qui ne sont pas satisfaits qu'ils aillent goûter aux écoles publiques, puis que pour eux ce n'est qu'une question de piastres et de sous." Thus the French War Cry (*Le Droit*, Feb. 18, 1914), in the language which is the guardian of their faith and the instrument of their national culture, brazenly proclaims that "brutal force and strength of numbers are the ultimate deciding criterions."

A Race Raid, Not a Religious War.

Your Eminence, this maladroit organ of the French-Canadian Educational Association terms your public letter to Archbishop Bruchesi "la parole autorisée du Cardinal Begin," and broadly interprets it "une éclatante justification de la résistance des Canadiens-français de l'Ontario."

From these two extraordinary claims English-speaking Catholics respectfully but firmly dissent. We deny that the French-Canadian raiders on the school system of Ontario have a right to declare, in the name of the Catholic Church, a religious war on the Government of this province. We protest against their dragging religion into their language agitation; we protest against their identifying their cause with that of the Separate Schools; we reprobate their methods as un-Catholic. We assert that only the united Catholic hierarchy of Ontario has a right to declare a province-wide religious war against a law or regulation of the Ontario Government. The united hierarchy has not done so. In fact the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Ontario (including Bishop Guigues and

Bishop Pinsonneault) accepted as a finality the Separate Schools Act of 1863, which (Section XXVI) brought the Separate schools as completely under the control of public regulations and inspection as the common schools. It is this Act of 1863 which defines our constitutional rights guaranteed by the British North America Act.

Your Eminence the one great need of the Catholic Church in Ontario for her peace, is more autonomy—a blessing that will come to her when the civil boundaries of the province shall be declared the exact limits of her own jurisdiction as well. Then, and only then, the Church will be in her own normal position here in Ontario, and she will be no longer confounded with her accidents, or suspected or rejected for what she is not.

To Sir Lomer Gouin.

You, Sir Lomer Gouin, the responsible head of the Civil Government of the Province of Quebec, may be helped to clearer apprehension and fairer appreciation of all this deplorable strife in a sister province, from a perusal of a statement given at Ottawa on the 29th day of April, 1914, and here renewed:—

"The English committee of the Separate School Trustees of the City of Ottawa deems it necessary, in view of the gravity of the present Ottawa Separate School crisis, to make the following statement to the Board of Trustees, and to the Separate School supporters of Ottawa.

"We hold that the whole history of the Separate Schools in Ottawa, since the Separate Schools Act was passed in 1863 till the present, proves:

"First, that two classes of schools have always existed here, the English and the French or bi-lingual.

"Second, that separation of some sort, so that the English would control the English schools and the French the bi-lingual schools, has always existed more or less perfectly.

"Third, that the greater the separation the more successfully the schools can be run.

"In 1886 the Ottawa school system was raised out of the chaotic state into which it had fallen, by having the principle of separation or autonomy applied not merely to control, but also to finance, the board having been resolved into two practically independent committees.

"The English schools having greater financial resources, the French coveting this, destroyed unfortunately in 1903, the independent committees. Later they permitted them to be restored as regards control, but not as regards finance.

"The principle that there should be one English and one French trustee from each ward has been recognized since 1863, when the English controlled four of the five wards. This principle implies that the English trustees should be nominated and elected exclusively by English-speaking voters, and the French trustees exclusively by French-speaking electors. This principle was openly accepted in 1906 by the great leader of the French-Canadian in school as well as religious and racial matters, the late Archbishop Duhamel. As far as the French trustees are concerned this principle is observed. There is not a French trustee on the board who was not nominated by Frenchmen, and elected by a majority of the French votes of his ward.

"On the other hand, the French of this city, priests and people, relying on the weight of their numbers, have decided to disregard this principle as far as English trustees are concerned. In the elections of April 25th, 1914, the two defeated English candidates had at least nine-tenths of the English votes. The French voters succeeded in electing two trustees not satisfactory to nine-tenths of the English-speaking ratepayers of these wards.

"This has intensified racial feeling tenfold and has driven a number of English supporters to the Public schools. A policy which drives English Separate school supporters to the Public schools is a fatal one. We now reiterate our claim, a claim which we have proved with great wealth of argument in our previous public statements to the press, that natural equity, business efficiency and civic peace require that the English Separate schools and the bi-lingual Separate schools of this city should be under two mutually, functionally and financially independent board or committees.

"We fail to see that the Ontario Government has any reason to object to the formation in Ottawa of these mutually independent school boards or committees. We are not asking the Government to create a new system of schools. We demand merely a new type of school board. It is unreasonable and impracticable to forcibly unite under joint management two fully developed sets of schools, different in language of instruction, different in curriculum, different in teachers' qualifications, different in inspectors. We have no objection to the French having their schools, but we do hold that they should pay for them. We object to a large part of our revenue going to their support, especially since we have great need of it ourselves.

POWER OF FRENCH VOTERS.

"We object to the present system, which permits the French voters of this city, who have a set of schools more different from our English Separate schools than are the Public schools from the Separate schools, to elect our trustees, to control our schools, and to spend our money. We maintain that, while temporary makeshifts may be found, the only satisfactory and permanent solution of the Ottawa Separate school difficulty is complete separation of the English Separate schools and the bi-lingual Separate schools. The French of this city have rejected this perfectly fair proposition with scorn and insults. Perhaps some day they may realize that it is also their only salvation.

"Meanwhile, as long as we are forced to remain in partnership with the bi-lingual trustees, we are bound to see that our partners do not ruin us. Unfortunately our partners have attempted and are attempting to ruin us, by their insurrectionist plan of campaign and frenzied finance.

"Let it be clearly understood that we have no direct part in this quarrel between the Ontario Government and the French-Canadian Educational Association. As long as our schools and our children are not thereby affected either directly or indirectly, the French may teach five hours a day of French in their schools for all we care. That is their business, not ours.

"Unfortunately, the French have dragged us into this quarrel with the Government, by seeking to make us, the neutral third party, the buffer between them and the Government. It is the fate of buffers to be crushed, and we are determined to no longer act as buffers.

"The bi-lingual trustees by illegally defying a Government regulation have involved the whole board in rebellion and have lost the Government grant for 1913 as a first consequence. It is impossible to maintain a Government system of schools in defiance of the Government. The Separate schools of Ontario form an integral part of the Government schools of Ontario. They were established not to teach French, but to teach English to Catholics.

"Concessions as regards the teaching of French have since been made both in the Public and Separate schools, the regulations being identical for each. If the French desire greater concessions, there are constitutional means of obtaining them. But we do not intend to let the French ruin our Separate schools, while they use militant tactics to obtain more French teaching.

"Not merely have the bi-lingualists attempted to make the English Separate schools a buffer between them and the Government; they have actually attempted to make the Catholic Church a similar buffer. They have attempted to justify their illegal defiance of the English-speaking inspector on religious grounds. They have denounced as bad Catholics those bishops, priests or laymen who refuse to support their illegal campaign.

"For many years practically the only inspectors were Protestant inspectors, and they were never refused admission into a Separate school, because they never interfered in religious matters. When on one historic occasion a Catholic teacher refused a school register to a Protestant inspector, he was rebuked by his bishop for doing so. The continuation classes in the Separate schools have to-day, as they always have had, only Protestant inspectors, and no objection has ever been raised against them. The religious war declared in this city by the French-Canadian Educational Association and the bi-lingual trustees is as much an insult to the authority of the Catholic Church as it is an affront to the Ontario Government.

"The real objection to the Protestant inspectors is that they are English and not French. When a few years ago it was found necessary in order to safeguard the rights of English-speaking children in the bi-lingual schools and to promote a greater efficiency in the teaching of English, to appoint English-speaking inspectors in addition to the bi-lingual inspectors, the French could have obtained English-speaking Catholics from the Government. These they did not want. So the Government gave them English-speaking Protestant inspectors, safeguarding their religious rights by giving the Protestant inspectors no authority to interfere in religious matters.

"The French, however, availed themselves of the chance thus offered to make religion a cloak for their nationalism and defied the inspectors on religious grounds. We will have nothing to do with this religious hypocrisy. If the chief inspector, who is a Protestant, should care to visit the English Separate schools of Ottawa, he will be very welcome. We know that he has authority to inspect our schools, and we know that he would not interfere in the slightest with our religious rights. There are none of our schools that we are afraid to have inspected.

"One word to the Ontario Government. The time has come to enforce instruction 17 either in its present or in a modified form. Let the Government either withdraw instruction 17 or enforce it. No self-respecting Government can any longer permit Government schools to be run in defiance of the Government, as are the Bi-lingual Separate schools of Ottawa to-day. If the Government cannot discipline the Bi-lingual schools that are defying the law, without penalizing, as it has unjustly done, the English schools that are observing the law, then that simply shows that separation is necessary. We refuse to have our schools made the buffer and crushed.

"Meanwhile, since the Government has not acted effectively, we have been forced to appeal to the courts. We are not going to allow the bi-lingual promoters of a frenzied finance to squander the money of our electors. So we, the members of the English Committees of

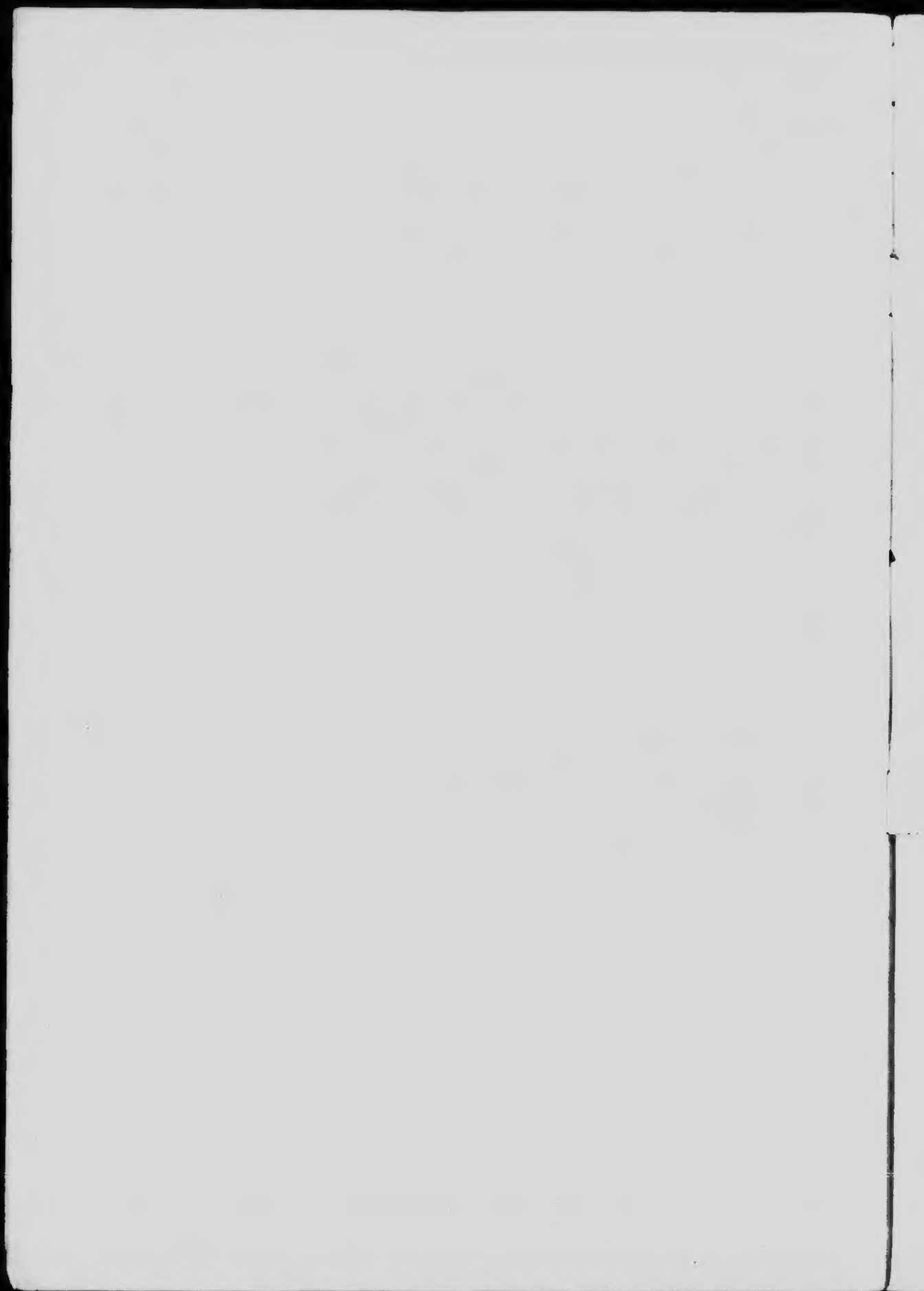
Trustees, in conjunction with the two defeated English candidates of St. George's and Dalhousie wards, have applied for an injunction to prevent the issue of debentures and for a mandamus to force the bilingual trustees to obey the law.

"In view of the lack of credit of the Ottawa Separate School Board, owing to its defiance of the Government and loss of the Government grant; in view of the stringency in the money market, enormous liabilities and high school rate of the Separate schools; in view of all this, to issue debentures for \$275,000, or \$350,000, would be simply frenzied finance; and as it is intended to use about half of this money to build schools which will be conducted in defiance of the Government, it would be simply misappropriating public funds. We believe that by means of the courts we shall be able to defend the interest of our electors, so that they can still prudently remain Separate school supporters."

And now the English-speaking Catholics of Ottawa, struggling to save their schools from ruin, respectfully ask your Eminence and you, Sir Lomer Gouin, what would you have them do, and wherein have they offended against the Church, against the State, or against the French people of Ontario?

M. J. WHELAN.

St. Patrick's Rectory,
Ottawa, Feb. 13, 1915.



SUPPLEMENT

From a Memorial presented to the Apostolic Delegate (Mgr. Sbarretti) in 1906 by a Committee representing the English-speaking Catholics of Ottawa, and published in the same year.

"In conclusion we submit that the facts herein set forth constitute such an unanswerable indictment of French aggression and unwarrantable ecclesiastical methods that their mere recital must convince Your Excellency of the necessity of immediate action. Every day that action is delayed a fresh injury is done to religion and education. Respect for ecclesiastical authority is fast disappearing, and unless radical means be taken to make that authority worthy of respect, the final result must be disastrous to the church. Hence we respectfully request that Your Excellency will at once take steps to secure the legislation necessary to make the French, or bi-lingual schools a system distinct and separate in law, as they are in fact from the English-speaking separate schools. Pending the securing of such legislation we beg further to request that Your Excellency will exercise the prerogatives of your exalted office and restore the essential features of the compact of 1886.

"It is no answer to our requests to say that to grant them will be to create a school board unlike any other in Ontario. Our reply to that is that the conditions of which we complain exist in no other city in Ontario, and that the remedy must be appropriate to the disease.

"If, apart from the reasons already given, further authority be required upon which to base the action requested by the committee, it is furnished by the Church itself. In this city especially, experience has shown the necessity of dividing the people in religious matter according to nationalities. Hence there are English and French parishes and English and French churches. Even in the distribution of charity, and in the case of the young and the infirm the necessity of the same division is recognized, and there are English and French conferences of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the English and French Orphanages and Asylums. In fact in all her dealings with the people the Church in this diocese recognizes the necessity of dividing them according to nationalities. Such being the case how can those who have promoted this division from the very first object to its being applied to the schools? If their answer still be that it lacks the sanction of law, then we ask Your Excellency to satisfy their consciences by obtaining the requisite legal sanction.

"One other consideration and we have done. The Church requires Catholics to support Catholic schools. With that policy we are in hearty accord. Now the Separate Schools Act provides for schools separate from the Public Schools on religious grounds only and on none other. We therefore ask Your Excellency, can English-speaking Catholics be required in conscience to support schools on language grounds, viz: The French, or as they are called, the bi-lingual schools? They are a new creation, not by Act of the Legislature, or amendment to the Separate Schools Act, but by regulation of the Education Department. These schools are altogether distinct from the regular separate schools—in curriculum, in text books, in standing of teachers, and are under separate or special inspector.

"They are not expected to compete with the public schools, while the English-speaking Catholic schools must and do compete with them. In fact, where they fail to do so, the English-speaking Catholics send their children to the public schools. Under these circumstances, therefore, we need scarcely say that if the church fails to do her duty, the conscience of the English-speaking Catholic people must not be submitted to outrage. This aspect of the case makes the question essentially one for Your Excellency to dispose of.

"The church which legislates in her own way, can, if her authorities will, settle this matter amicably. Failing that, the authorities should ask for special legislation for French or bi-lingual schools—a separation for language purposes altogether distinct from religious."